Smithsonian Gardens

Poquoson Learning Garden

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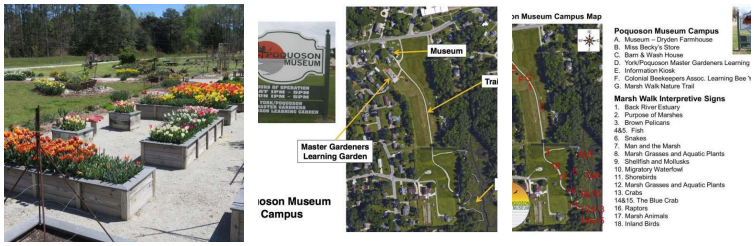
MEDIA



The Poquoson Learning Garden is located at the Poquoson Museum, the former sixteen acre William Freeman Dryden farm in the City of Poquoson, Virginia. The museum campus contains a circa 1900 farm house, agricultural out buildings, frontage along the marshes of Topping Creek and a country store known as 'Miss Becky's Store' that served local residents for many years. The Poquoson Museum's mission is to preserve, promote, interpret, document, and educate the public about the history and heritage of the Poquoson community. As part of this vision, the museum set aside several acres of the property to be "farmed", which led them to approve the Virginia Cooperative Extension York County/Poquoson Master Gardeners 2013 proposal to establish the garden at the museum.

The garden serves as an educational resource for the museum and the York-Poquoson communities; it highlights the former role of the museum property as the site of the Dryden Farm; it complements the museum's goal to foster interest in learning (in this case learning about gardening, native plants, beneficial insects, etc.); it provides a location for hands-on interactive educational sessions for schools and students of all ages; it maintains the objective of the museum to be a park with gardens and open space; and the garden enhances the museum's goal to be a focal point within the community.

The Poquoson Learning Garden is a "sunny" garden that complements the Virginia Cooperative Extension York County/Poquoson Master Gardeners other, predominantly "shade" garden, located in York County, Virginia. The Poquoson garden is a place for learning about sustainable gardening practices that can be introduced into York County/City of Poquoson home landscapes and gardens. The approximately one-third acre garden is composed of individual raised bed sub-gardens for vegetables, herbs, cut flowers and perennials

The garden was designed to be fully accessible, with hard packed, safe and stable pathways throughout the garden. The Poquoson Learning Garden is open to the public and anyone wanting to take a self-tour is welcome to do so.

We minimized labor and construction costs of the garden's raised bed planters by working with the Woodworking and Construction classes at the New Horizons Career and Technical Education Center in Newport News, Virginia to design and build the raised beds. Seed donations are received annually from Renee's Garden and the Chas. C. Hart Seed Co. Each fall Brent and Becky's Bulbs in Gloucester, Virginia donates 4,000-6,000 tulip, daffodil and other bulbs that are planted in the empty raised beds or mixed in with the garden's border plantings.

The garden provides a space for hands on learning, demonstration and for engagement with York County/Poquoson residents and school children. York County/Poquoson Master Gardeners plan, maintain and execute the design and care of the garden.

As the rivers and creeks surrounding, dissecting and dominating Poquoson's landscape have played such a major role in the city's history, the museum completed work in 2013 on a mile long interpretive marsh walk along Topping Creek to provide visitors with insights into the community's marsh landscape. The Marsh Walk Trail incorporates 750 feet of raised platforms with interpretive signs highlighting different native wildlife and plant life. In addition, in 2013 the York County/Poquoson Master Gardener Tree Stewards developed a "treescaping" plan for the museum and the museum has planted more than 100 native trees and shrubs (eighteen different species) along the trail. The Master Gardeners installed tree identification signs for the trees and shrubs with their common name, Latin name, and distinguishing characteristics.

In addition to hard packed, safe and stable pathways throughout the garden, the garden features a number of resourceful Adaptive Gardening techniques including wheelchair accessible raised beds and planters, an "A" frame for growing vines; various vertical planters for persons who cannot bend down to the ground; a set of three multilevel raised beds to help persons learn the best height of a raised planter for their special needs, or benches set at different heights to help persons learn the height at which they sit most comfortably; and a raised bed with seats for persons who need to sit while gardening.

There garden also features an outdoor classroom pergola to host gardening workshops. It functions as a space for hands-on learning and demonstration for engagement with York-Poquoson residents and school children, and is the focal point for the plant sale.

The garden has a Mailbox Information Center that contains information on the garden, native plants, butterflies, birds, pollinators, bees and the museum. The garden also shares an Information Kiosk with the Museum located at the head of the nature trail.

TYPE

Garden open to the public

TAGS

ADA-accessible, education, master gardeners, museum garden, native plants, outdoor classroom, public garden, trees, Virginia

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